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Order 2002-4-5  
Served: April 10, 2002



**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.**

Issued by the Department of Transportation  
on the 5th day of April, 2002

Essential Air Service at

**Laurel/Hattiesburg, Mississippi**

under 49 U.S.C. 41731 *et seq.*

**Docket OST-2001-10685 - 15**

**ORDER ALLOWING REDUCTION IN SERVICE**

**SUMMARY**

By this order, the Department is allowing Express Airlines I (Express I) to reduce its current service at Laurel/Hattiesburg, Mississippi, from three round trips a day to Memphis to two.

**ESSENTIAL AIR SERVICE DETERMINATION**

Laurel/Hattiesburg's Essential Air Service (EAS) determination was established by Order 94-5-6 and requires at least two round trips each weekday and over each weekend period to either Memphis, Atlanta, or New Orleans, providing at least 44 seats in each direction.

**BACKGROUND AND DECISION**

On September 21, 2001, Express I filed a 90-day notice of its intent to suspend its unsubsidized scheduled air service at Laurel/Hattiesburg, effective on January 1, 2002. Since Express I was the only carrier serving Laurel/Hattiesburg, the Department issued Order 2001-12-26, served on January 4, 2002, requiring the carrier to continue to provide three round trips each weekday and two round trips over each weekend in the Laurel/Hattiesburg - Memphis market. We had originally required the carrier to provide three round trips a day because the flights also served Meridian, Mississippi. By sharing the seat capacity of the aircraft with Meridian, each community received one-half of the total number of seats provided in the Laurel/Hattiesburg - Meridian - Memphis market, or approximately 50 seats each way, each weekday and weekend period.

On April 1, 2002, Express I petitioned the Department to allow it to immediately reduce its current level of service at Laurel/Hattiesburg from three round trips each weekday and weekend to two. In its petition, Express I cited the fact that Laurel/Hattiesburg is now served on a nonstop, turnaround basis to Memphis, meaning that all 33 seats are available for Laurel/Hattiesburg passengers on every flight.<sup>1</sup> As a result, Laurel/Hattiesburg is receiving far in excess of the number of seats required under the EAS program. As mentioned in Order 2001-12-26, the community is guaranteed a total of 44 seats in each direction every weekday and weekend. Even with two round trips a day, Express I will provide 66 seats in each direction at Laurel/Hattiesburg each weekday and weekend, far exceeding the 44-seat requirement.

This order is issued under authority delegated in 49 CFR 1.56a(f).

**ACCORDINGLY,**

1. We allow Express Airlines I, d/b/a Northwest Airlink to immediately reduce its level of service at Laurel/Hattiesburg, Mississippi, from three weekday round trips and two nonstop round trips to Memphis to two nonstop round trips each weekday and weekend to Memphis; and
2. This docket remains open until further order of the Department; and
3. We will serve copies of this order on the Mayor and airport manager of Laurel/Hattiesburg, Mississippi, the Governor of Mississippi, the Aeronautics Division of the Mississippi Department of Transportation, and Express Airlines I, d/b/a Northwest Airlink.

By:

**READ C. VAN DE WATER**  
Assistant Secretary for Aviation  
and International Affairs

(SEAL)

*An electronic version of this document is available on the World Wide Web at*

<http://dms.dot.gov>

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<sup>1</sup> Express I serves Laurel/Hattiesburg with 33-seat, Saab 340 aircraft.